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**A PRE-PUBLICATION RELIABILITY STUDY OF THE REVISED  
JOSEPH SELF-CONCEPT SCALE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN**

By,  
Dianne Wilkens

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
Of  
The Graduate School  
At  
Rowan University  
May 4, 1999

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved 5/3/99

## **ABSTRACT**

Dianne Wilkens

### **A PRE-PUBLICATION RELIABILITY STUDY OF THE REVISED JOSEPH SELF-CONCEPT SCALE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN 1999**

Dr. John Klanderman  
School Psychology

The purpose of this study was to test the reliability of the Joseph Self-Concept Scale For Young Children, as an instrument for measuring self-concept. The sample consisted of thirty-four first and pre-first students from the Mary E Roberts Elementary School, Moorestown, New Jersey. The timeframe for the testing was November 1998 through February 1999. Each student was individually tested utilizing the JSSYC .

The null hypothesis, stating there is no difference between the test and re-test scores, was rejected. The alternative hypothesis, stating that there is a difference between the test and re-test scores was accepted.

A paired sample correlation analysis yielded a Pearson correlation coefficient of .508, and a corresponding significance of 0.002. The correlation of .508 was markedly influenced by an outlying value. The correlation coefficient does not provide a good description of the relationship between the two variables when the distribution is skewed.

Other limitations were that the tested population was a small sample and the demographic population of Moorestown may have skewed the test results.

The JSSYC is a reliable indicator of a child's self-concept.

**MINI-ABSTRACT**

Dianne Wilkens

**A PRE-PUBLICATION RELIABILITY STUDY OF THE  
REVISED JOSEPH SELF-CONCEPT SCALE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN**

1999

Dr. John Klanderman  
School Psychology

The reliability of the JSSYC for measuring self-concept was tested.

The alternative hypothesis, that there is a difference between the test and re-test scores was accepted. The test is reliable.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

The primary reason for choosing to do research on the Joseph Self-Concept Scale for young children, JSSYC, is that it supports a school based goal of developing a positive self-concept in the students that attend the school. At the present time there is no screening instrument being used. This research affords the opportunity to utilize and evaluate a testing instrument that will provide supportive data. This test is recommended in the Special Education Assessment Matrix (1981) as one of the best available for measuring the self-concept of young children.

Becoming involved in the re-standardization, by conducting a test re-test reliability study, presents a challenge and a goal for research.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to test the reliability of the Joseph Self-Concept Scale for Young Children, JSSYC, as an instrument for measuring self-concept. A one-week time interval test re-test will be conducted with six and seven year old students.

### **Hypothesis**

The Joseph Self- Concept Scale for Young Children, JSSYC, is a reliable indicator of a child's self-concept.

The dependent variable is the score on the test, and the independent variable is the



test, the Joseph Self-Concept Scale for Young Children, JSSYC.

### **Theory**

The self-concept is central to Carl Rogers' person centered theory. In it he states that self-concept is the organized set of characteristics that the individual perceives as being peculiar to him or herself. The self-concept is primarily a social product and is acquired through social contact. Rogers believed that when we interact with significant people in our environment, parents, brothers, sisters, friends, teachers, we begin to develop a concept of self that is largely based on the evaluation of others. That is we come to evaluate ourselves in terms of what others think and not in terms of what we feel. The reason we rely so heavily on the evaluation of others, according to Rogers, is that we have a strong need for positive regard. Rogers was uncertain whether this need is innate or learned, but maintained that its origins are less important than its impact on the individual. When we satisfy another's needs, we experience satisfaction of our own need for positive regard (Ryckman, 1993).

Within Maslow's needs hierarchy towards self-actualization there is a component of esteem. He describes esteem needs as being the last of the basic urges to emerge. Maslow maintained that the individuals become sick when these needs are thwarted. He divided them into two sets: esteem based on respect for our own competence, independence, and accomplishments, and esteem based on others' evaluations. Esteem needs of the second type are best seen in the striving for recognition from others and in attempts to secure status, fame, dominance, importance, and appreciation (Maslow, 1970). He also believed that we should base our self-esteem on actual competence and adequacy at the task rather than the praise or criticism from others (Ryckman, 1993).

Carl Jung conceived of personal development as a dynamic and evolving process that occurs throughout life. A person is continually developing, learning new skills, and moving towards self-realization. Although Jung had little to say about the developmental process in childhood, it is clear that he did not accept Freud's view that the individual's personality was relatively fixed by the end of childhood. Neither did he accept Freud's view that only past events determine a person's behavior. For Jung, behavior was determined not only by past experiences but also by future goals (Ryckman, 1993).

According to Gordon Allport, children begin to develop a self-image. The self-image has two components: (1) learned expectations of the roles we are required to enact, and (2) aspirations for the future we seek to attain (Allport, 1955). The self-image evolves slowly in conjunction with the conscience. Children learn to do things that others expect of them and to avoid behaviors that will bring disapproval. They begin to formulate plans for the future and to make tentative decisions about careers and the values they will embrace (Ryckman, 1993).

Bandura has extended his social cognitive position by postulating a cognitive mechanism of self-efficacy to account for personality functioning and change (Bandura, 1977). In his view, healthy people have acquired high (but realistic) efficacy expectations that guide their actions, whereas abnormal people have acquired low and often unrealistic expectations that adversely influence their performance. Efficacy expectations are beliefs or convictions on the part of individuals that they can produce certain outcomes or effects. According to Bandura, efficacy expectations influence people's choices of activities and environmental settings. Judgments of self-efficacy also

determine how much effort people will expend on activities and how long they will persist on challenging tasks in the face of aversive experiences (Ryckman, 1993).

Bandura believes that efficacy expectations are rooted primarily in personal mastery experiences. Success experiences tend to create high expectations, whereas failure experiences tend to generate low expectations. Once strong, high efficacy expectations have been created, however, occasional failures are unlikely to have much impact on people's judgments of their capabilities. Conversely, once low expectations have been instilled by repeated failure, occasional successes are not very effective in changing people's judgments of their capabilities. However, low expectations can be changed by repeated and frequent successes fueled by determined effort on the part of the individuals (Ryckman, 1993).

### **Definitions**

The Joseph Self-Concept Scale for Young Children will be referred to as the JSSYC.

Reliability refers to the consistency of scores obtained by the same persons when they are re-examined with the same test on different occasions, or with different sets of equivalent items, or under other variable examining conditions.

Test-Retest Reliability The most obvious method for finding the reliability of test scores is by repeating the identical test on a second occasion.

Self-Concept is a core construct in the child's social-emotional development. It evolves at an early age and seems to achieve some level of maturity and stability, all before the child steps foot into his first classroom. However, the assertion that the self-concept is fairly well formed and becomes somewhat stable at a young age does not

necessarily imply that after a certain point it becomes irreversibly constant and unchangeable. On the contrary, the self-concept seems to maintain some level of malleability at all age levels.

### **Assumptions**

The students involved in the screening are motivated and will answer as honestly as their limited experiences allow.

The students in the prefirst class and the students in the traditional first grade may have a wide variation of scores because of their developmental levels, even though their ages are chronologically the same.

### **Limitations**

Demographically, Moorestown, New Jersey, is an upper middle class community. This may be a skewed population.

The test sample of thirty-four students may be limited.

### **Overview**

In Chapter Two a review of the most recent research will be cited. The terms self-concept, self-realization, self-image, and self-efficacy are signature words of the great theorists to explain their individual theories about the developing sense of self. Assessed will be the issues of gender, culture, and parent, teacher, and peer relationships that all contribute to the child's evolving self-concept. In addition to theory, foreign and domestic studies will be cited addressing the issue of self-concept in young children. Chapter Three will expand upon the design of the study, and Chapter Four will analyze and interpret the results of the study. Chapter Five will summarize the results, draw conclusions from the findings and generate implications for further research

## **Chapter Two**

### **Introduction**

In order to be really effective, education's primary goal must be to help students develop positive views of themselves, to identify with others, and to be open to experience and acceptance by others. It is fortunate if children come to school already on the road to such goals as a result of their early life with a warm, loving family. The school's responsibility becomes that of continuing the process begun in the home, by helping the children as they mature to expand their positive feelings about their body self, their social self, and their cognitive self. A sense of competence and worth, which high-self-concept children seem to have, is related to higher achievement, curiosity, creativity and greater independence.

In a perfect world a teacher could just proceed along the continuum and accomplish grade level goals. Reality based teaching needs to prepare professionals to deal with all children regardless of their perceived self-concept. Chapter Two builds an understanding of the multidimensional constructs that contribute to building self-concept in young children, the age that a child can identify how he/she perceives their self-concept, and ways to enhance self-concept. Chapter Two also addresses the issues of gender, culture, and parent, teacher, and peer relationships that all contribute to the child's evolving self-concept. Studies are cited that provide insight to enhance self-

concept in the elementary school child. Screening instruments are cited that help to identify levels of self-concept.

### **Current Research**

Harter (1989) asserted that although children younger than 8 years old possess an underlying sense of self, they cannot yet verbalize it; furthermore, they do not even have a conscious concept of it. As a result, self-report measures of self-esteem are inappropriate to tap such feelings in young children. Harter proposed two alternatives. First, young children's domain-specific self-perceptions can be assessed (perceptions of competence and acceptance) (Harter & Pike, 1984). Second, the behavioral manifestations of self-esteem can be measured via a behavioral rating scale filled in, for example, by the teacher (Haltiwanger & Harter, 1988; Harter, 1989). Although recent research has yielded promising results with regard to the assessment of young children's inner thoughts and feelings about their worthiness (Cassidy, 1988; Verschueren, Marcoen, & Schoefs, 1996), the assessment of children's behaviorally presented self-esteem is still important in itself. Indeed, as stated by Fuchs-Beauchamp (1996), overt, behaviorally presented self-esteem may influence how others interact with a child, thereby affecting the child's further development. For example, a child's behaviorally presented self-esteem may affect the number and types of learning opportunities provided by the teacher and may hence influence the child's further development of competence.

In a recent study the connection between 5-year-olds' behaviorally presented self-esteem and their domain-specific self-perceptions and the stability in behaviorally presented self-esteem across a 3-year period (between age 5 and age 8) were examined. The behavioral manifestations of self-esteem were rated by the childrens' teachers using

the Behavioral Rating Scale of Presented Self-Esteem in Young Children (Haltiwanger & Harter, 1988). The children's domain-specific self-perceptions were assessed by the Pictorial Scale for Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance (Harter & Pike, 1984).

The study found considerable stability of behavioral self-esteem across a 3-year period. Children who showed relatively high levels of confidence, curiosity, initiative, and independence at age 5 were likely to continue to show those behavioral manifestations of self-esteem at age 8. The stability was especially high, given that two different teachers evaluated the children. Hence, the stability cannot be attributed purely to potential stability in the individual teachers' perceptions of the children. Given this high degree of stability in behavioral self-esteem from age 5 on, it seems important to detect children with low self-confidence as early as possible and to provide them opportunities to enhance their self-confidence, for example, by giving them tasks that are challenging but within their range of competence, or by helping them to persevere when difficulties or frustrations arise.

The gender differences confirm the results of Fuchs-Beauchamp's (1996) study with 94 preschoolers. She reported higher presented self-esteem scores for girls than for boys. However, in line with previous research on preschoolers, girls and boys did not differ in their self-reported self-perceptions. Hence, as Fuchs-Beauchamp already stated, one can only conclude that others view preschool girls, as compared with preschool boys, as more confident regarding school-related and peer-related activities. Their own perceptions of competence and acceptance do not necessarily coincide with this view.

Results indicated that the kindergartners who showed more behavioral self-esteem generally perceived themselves as more competent ( in the cognitive and physical

domains) than the kindergartners who showed less behavioral self-esteem. Hence, the children's overt indications of self-esteem seem to be connected to their inner thoughts and feelings about themselves, more specifically, to their thoughts and feelings about their competence.

This connection may be interpreted in several ways. First, as Fuchs-Beauchamp (1996) speculated, children who present more behavioral self-confidence may be given more learning opportunities by teachers, thus leading to higher self-reported competence. Second, a positive perception of competence may make the child more eager to try new things or to prefer challenging tasks, whereas a negative self-perception may render the child more reserved and less willing to try new or difficult things. Third, both the child's behavioral self-confidence and his or her self-perceptions may be related to actual competence. Although Haltiwanger and Harter (Haltiwanger & Harter, 1989) stated that confidence, not competence, is the core element of presented self-esteem in young children, it is conceivable that, compared to less competent children, children with greater competence have more positive experiences with school related activities and thus may have more opportunities for developing a sense of security and confidence.

The results of this study showed that the 8-year-olds' presented self-esteem was highly related to the self-esteem they had shown 3 years before.

### **All I Really Needed to Know I learned in Kindergarten**

During the effective schools research in the late 1970s, surveys of educators demonstrated that self-concept development in children was clearly an important component in educating the whole child (Silvernail, 1979). Studies suggest that student self-concept, if left unchecked, appears to decline as students advance in grade level



(Bandura, 1982; DeMoulin, 1993; Harper & Purkey, 1993; Silvernail, 1987) with the decline beginning as early as grade 2 (Burnett, 1993). As a result, it is imperative that positive self-concept development should begin as early as possible which is one explanation for initiating self-concept development through a special personalized book at the kindergarten level (De Moulin, 1993; Wheeler, 1994).

Results of this study indicate that including the specialized book, I Like Me, significantly improved a child's self-concept development. Results also suggested that teachers may need to pay closer attention to students' hidden needs. Results further suggest that parents perceived little problem with their child's initial and subsequent development. Because of the ramification of this finding, it might be one explanation why some parents lose sight of symptoms from their child's weakness in school and/or their child's failure in the social ring. By the time parents recognize the problem, it may be too late for the child (De Moulin, 1996).

### **My Mother, Myself**

The single most important person in the infant's environment is the primary caregiver. This is the individual who will exert the most influence over the development of the self. As infants interact with the primary caregiver and other caregivers, their awareness of self-experiences is translated into a concept of self. Infants soon learn that certain behaviors cause people to respond to them in warm, accepting, and loving ways. Babies also learn that other kinds of behaviors cause people to become angry, disgusted, and rejecting. Because infants need to be accepted, they try to modify their behavior to obtain positive responses and to avoid negative ones. This is why it is vitally important for parents and other caregivers to be aware of infants' real needs. Babies need to be

unconditionally accepted as themselves. Infants are never deliberately “bad”. They just are! It is adults who place value-laden labels on infants’ behaviors. We verbally and nonverbally convey our feelings to infants. Cooing, smiling, and playful reactions tell infants we accept and enjoy them. Actions such as frowning, a harsh tone of voice, or ignoring babies convey the message that we dislike and reject them. Infants internalize these responses and begin to see themselves reflected in them. Thus their self-concepts are formed on the basis of how others perceive and respond to them (Bailey, 1952).

The concept of the “looking glass” self was coined by Cooley (1902), who stated, “The self is a reflection of what individuals think others’ judgements are of them”. In Cooley’s theory, how a mother perceives and treats her child would result in a favorable or unfavorable self-concept (Samuels, 1977).

### **Educators**

There have been theories suggesting that if an individual thinks well of himself, he is likely to think well of others. Empirical studies also have supported the concept that those who accept themselves tend to accept others, and that those who accepted themselves perceived others as self-accepting. In his study of 120 third graders, Aspy (1969) concluded that there was a positive relationship between teacher’s self-concept and student’s cognitive growth (Samuels, 1977).

Teachers are “significant others” in the lives of young children and those who are threatened by feelings of inadequacy are bound to project these feelings onto the children they teach, regardless of how they structure their programs. Their feelings of worthlessness are particularly devastating for those children who already have negative self-concepts and multiproblem home situations. The effect of negative school attitudes

tend to be less severe if the home engenders (and continues to engender) positive self-feelings (Samuels, 1977).

Reading, an achievement area that is a significant skill essential for success in our society, has been found to be correlated with self-concept in many recent studies with children in grades one through twelve (Henderson & Long, 1965; Zimmerman & Allebrand, 1965; Williams & Cole, 1968; Hebert, 1968; Sears, 1970; Trowbridge & Trowbridge, 1972; Williams, 1973). Green and Zirkel (1971) and Mc Daniel (1967), in studies of Spanish-speaking elementary school children, found that self-concept was positively related to verbal skills in both English and Spanish. In most of these studies race, sex, and social class were controlled and the significant correlations between self-concept and the achievement held with these variables controlled (Samuels, 1977).

Heathers (1955), who studied forty two – to five-year-olds at the Fels Institute, observed that socially competent children engaged in more social play, were more assertive, and sought attention or approval from children more than from adults. McCandless et al. (1961) observed preschool children in a free play situation. They found that popularity and emotional dependency were negatively related to one another. The popular children were the more independent individuals. Henderson and Long (1971), in a study of ninety-five black lower-class children a year after school entrance, found, in comparing the children's self-social concepts, behavior ratings by teachers, and reading behavior of the children, that the children in the first grade who were reading had a mature independence, while the nonreaders were overdependent and those who were not promoted were socially withdrawn (Samuels, 1977).

The research seems to indicate that a child who feels good about himself tends to be adjusted socially and to be more accepted by his peers. This social acceptance must increase self-concept. One sees a vicious cycle developing. As the child succeeds with his peers, he feels better about himself and continues interacting with them. The child who is worried about failing because of past experiences of fear feels like a failure, so he doesn't get involved in a group and the more of a failure he perceives himself to be, the more inadequate he feels and the less he gets involved (Samuels, 1977).

### **Anxiety and Self-Concept**

McNelly (1972) cited studies using different rating devices that showed that there is a definite association between anxiety and a discrepancy between how a child actually perceives herself and how she wishes she were; the higher the anxiety, the greater the discrepancy. He felt that children protect themselves from anxiety if they have such self-evaluation, by avoiding anxiety-arousing stresses. Felker (1974), stated that anxiety is bound up in the mechanisms that maintain a positive or negative self-concept. These mechanisms influence the manner in which an individual will respond to situations involving achievement or evaluation. Thus, it seems that the use of these mechanisms, whose role it is to protect the person from further stress and anxiety, would constrict children's behavior and exploration and inhibit growth (Samuels, 1977).

The research suggests that realistic self-criticism, acceptance of responsibility for intellectual achievement, approval from others, and rewards that lead to self-reinforcement and independence are variables related to achievement and positive self-feeling. Children who come to school lacking in confidence and who are in reality capable cognitively might reveal their feelings of inadequacy by being defensive,

anxious, and unwilling to try new activities. This should be a danger signal to teachers, because these behaviors could lead to academic and social failure, regardless of the true ability of the child (Samuels, 1977).

### **Gender Roles and Self-Concept**

Kohlberg theorized that gender identity becomes stabilized at about five or six years of age at about the same time the Piaget concept of conservation is attained. As the child develops cognitively, and begins to conserve, the concepts become more realistic. Cognitive development, plus the child's growing understanding of cultural sex roles, determine his sexual behavior (Samuels, 1977).

Positive feelings as to one's maleness or femaleness are essential for development. Generally the research has indicated that sex-role stereotyping discriminates against both sexes but in different ways. All the theories have hypothesized that identification with the parent of the same sex is facilitated if warmth, reward, punishment, and power are inherent in the relationship with the child. It seems imitation is not the only way one's sex-role is learned, but more complex cognitive and psychological processes are operative. Methodological problems may have prevented researchers from seeing substantial self-concept differences between the sexes. There may be no differences in actuality or it is possible that the negative variables for each sex balance out. Differences in sexual behavior are based on the complex interaction of biological factors and socialization practices. There is general agreement that environmental influences affect sex-role behavior, but there is less accord regarding the relative importance of biological factors. If constitutional variables differentially influence the behavior of boys and girls in significant ways, the quality of treatment

would not wipe out sexual differences. On the other hand, if genetic factors play a minimal role in determining personality, equal socialization practices would substantially reduce dissimilarities.

There are individual predispositions creating a range of personality types at birth for both sexes (Thomas et al., 1963). Our recognition of individual differences would enable us to utilize appropriate practices that consider constructive techniques to develop positive sexual self-concept in every child. A strict definition of how a boy or a girl should be treated in the end may prevent the child from having positive self-feelings and from developing to his or her full potential (Samuels, 1977).

### **Multicultural Considerations**

Racial recognition and evaluation occurs before the fifth year of life and becomes more stable with time. Parents' positions in society, and their feelings in regard to that status, may indirectly affect their child. If the parent is a member of a minority group, their self-feelings may be negative. In the earlier studies that have been conducted on this issue, many of the investigators did not control for class and they found that Negro children had negative self-feelings as compared to white children. Many recent studies controlling for class have suggested that Negro children's self-feelings may not be different from that of white children of equal class. It may be that as a group they really do not have depressed self-concepts, that defensive behavior may distort responses, or that only low academic and/or racial self-concept exists (not social or global personal self-concept). More likely, a combination of these factors are present. It has been suggested that the lower- class black individual's family has its own subculture and has values that give unity and pride to individuals who do not need to identify themselves in

terms of middle class white society. The fact that self-concept seems to decrease as children come in contact with middle-class society, which has been shown (1) by desegregation studies, (2) by research that has compared isolated, southern black children to black children who have had more contacts with white society, and, (3) by studies that have shown middle-class blacks to have lower racial self-esteem, supports the theory that as children are exposed to new “significant others,” they tend to evaluate themselves in comparison to these groups. We must not lose sight of the diversity within a class or race, which is undoubtedly accounted for by family stability, racial pride, child rearing, and other factors as yet untested (Samuels, 1977).

### **Evaluative Resources**

There are a variety of instruments designed to access self-concept; they are the Tennessee Self Concept Scale, Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale, Multi-Dimensional Self Concept Scale, Social Skills Rating System, Inferred Self Concept Scale, the Child Depression Inventory and the Joseph Self- Concept Scale for Young Children, JSSYC.

The JSSYC was initially conceived on a theoretical basis. The scale therefore defines self-concept as the way an individual perceives himself, his behaviors, how others view him, and the feelings of personal worth and satisfaction that are attached to these perceptions. The JSSYC measures this personal judgement based upon five general dimensions. However, these dimensions may not be considered equally important.

The two dimensions that are of primary importance include: Significance-the extent to which we perceive ourselves as being valued by significant others; and Competence-the perception of being able to successfully perform and master environmental demands (Joseph, 1979). General Evaluative Contentment-feelings of

satisfaction with one's present life circumstance is the third dimension that is evaluated in the restandardized form of the JSSYC.

The JSSYC was developed in response to a significant need to objectively screen and identify children at the preschool and primary school stage, who, due to their negative self-appraisals, may become high risk learning problems or develop other adjustment difficulties. For many children, a poor self-concept may be a primary cause rather than merely an effect of failing in school. It then follows that the formation of a negative self-concept and subsequent negative self-appraisals may be present before a child formally becomes a school participant. Therefore, for many of these children the JSSYC may be an excellent predictor of future academic success (Joseph, 1979).

### **Summary**

Self-concept is the mental image or perception that one has of oneself. Self esteem is the evaluative term that measures the pride in oneself, also referred to as self-respect. May it become a common goal of educators to aid in the development of a positive self-concept in the children that they teach. In this way children from age eight on can come to understand what self-concept means, why they have the perceptions they do about themselves, and be given the tools to enhance their self-concept, hence raising their level of self esteem. Research provides insight into the effects that age, gender, culture, parent, teacher and peer relationships, have upon the developing frame of reference one has about themselves. Screening instruments were cited that evaluate how preschool children view their self-concept. Studies shared ways that educators can directly teach and provide concrete examples for their students to identify and raise their levels of self-esteem, even at the kindergarten level.



## **Chapter Three**

### **Sample**

The sample consisted of thirty-four students enrolled in the Moorestown Township Public School District. The school was a K-4 elementary school. Twenty were first graders and fourteen were pre-first students. There were eleven first grade boys and nine first grade girls. From the pre-first class there were nine boys and five girls. The combined sample was comprised of six and seven year olds.

The pre-first children attended a regular kindergarten with their peers, but at the end of their kindergarten year it was determined that they needed an additional year to be ready for first grade. The pre-first child may exhibit:

- academic weakness
- physical delays in motor development
- lack of stamina for a full day program
- emotional lags
- difficulty in handling change
- impulsive behaviors or erratic self control
- social skill development that manifests itself through egocentric behavior
- preferences for solitary rather than group academic activities

### **Demographic Information**

The District Factor Group (DFG) is an indicator of socioeconomic status of residents in each district and is a useful tool for comparing different schools across the state. According to the State Education Department factors in the DFG include income, educational level attained by adults, poverty level, and occupation. They range from A-J, J being the highest. Roberts School is in factor group I.

### **Development of the Test Instrument**

The Joseph Self-Concept Scale for Young Children, JSSYC, was originally developed and designed specifically for preschool children. Subsequent refinements and applications have documented its usefulness at upper age levels; however it was the author's overriding interest in the social-emotional development of these young children that prompted its inception.

The JSSYC was developed in response to a significant need to objectively screen and identify children at the preschool and primary stage, who, due to their negative self-appraisals, may become high risk learning problems or develop other adjustment difficulties. For many children, a poor self-concept may be a primary cause rather than merely an effect of failing in school. It then follows that the formation of a negative self-concept and subsequent negative self-appraisals may be present before a child formally becomes a school participant. Therefore, for many of these children, the JSSYC may be an excellent predictor of future academic success.

The JSSYC's usefulness may also be seen in light of the landmark federal legislation of 1975 entitled "The Education For All Handicapped Children Act" which is also referred to as Public Law 94-142. PL94-142 requires that public schools in every state develop a method to locate and properly evaluate handicapped children so that a

free and appropriate public education can be made available to them. The requirement of a comprehensive evaluation includes, among other things, a valid assessment of the child's emotional state. This has presented a serious challenge to many school systems since their range of responsibility has also been extended downward to include and qualify children as young as 3 years of age. Therefore, the task of objectively assessing the emotional status of these young children (especially if they are non-verbal) has been a formidable one. The utilization of the JSSYC for this purpose may therefore greatly enhance the school's ability to carry out such provisions by providing an objective empirically based assessment procedure whose results may be translated directly into affective educational goals.

In addition to initially identifying the aforementioned high risk children, this scale may be used as a viable measure of affective development and social-emotional growth in preschool and primary school programs. The importance of objectively documenting social-emotional gains in the rapidly expanding field of early childhood education is essential.

### **Description of the Instrument**

Original items developed for this scale were primarily selected on a rational face validity basis in order to tap the theoretical self-concept dimensions of Significance, Competence, Power, General Evaluative Contentment, and Virtue. They were chosen based on their ability to be understood by the young child and on their inherent ability to be portrayed by pictures. The situations that eventually were chosen to be depicted were thought to be within the range of experience (either real or perceived) of most children, including those whose environmental backgrounds were limited.

Because young children have relatively short attention spans, limited verbal skills, immaturely developed abstract thinking processes, minimal introspectional abilities, and generally cannot read it was concluded that the test format be semi-projective in nature. It would require the child to merely respond in a non-verbal fashion (by pointing) to options that were clearly illustrated by pictures. The pictures would then serve several purposes in that they would help the child to understand the meaning of a particular item, aid the examiner in assessing the child's ability to understand test items, allow the child to respond in a non-verbal fashion, and maximize the child's interest in the test. It was also determined that the style of the pictures used to illustrate test questions would be simple black line drawings which conformed to the idea of line economy: the knack of creating pictorial expressions with minimum use of line. This projective style would help to insure that subjects would not be responding to irrelevant stimulus properties of the pictures; yet, at the same time, the pictures would be clear enough to be easily interpreted.

The Joseph Self-Concept Scale for Young Children, JSSYC, features a preschool-primary age section for ages 3-0 to 7-11 that maintains a pictorial format composed of two parts: an Identity Reference Drawing (IRD) and a set of 21 self-concept situation items. The "unisex" IRD form is represented by a line drawing of a figure with a blank face and shoulder outline. The 21 scale items utilize a forced-choice self-report format, 20 of which are illustrated with dichotomous pairs of gender appropriate pictures; one picture in each pair represents a negative self-concept situation and the other represents a positive self-concept situation.

Test materials include the IRD figure, preschool-primary record forms, and

bound sets of boy and girl stimulus cards. The first 41 cards in each bound booklet are utilized for the preschool-primary section. A set of boy and girl minority cards, which are identical to their standard counterparts but feature darker skin and hair shading, are provided. The choice whether to use the standard boy or girl stimulus cards versus the minority cards is based on the examiner's judgment regarding which set of cards each subject is likely to identify with.

### **Scoring Procedures**

The drawing of the IRD figure primarily serves as a tangible reminder that the subject is being asked to describe himself or herself when responding to the 21 items of the scale. Although the IRD is not objectively scored, Joseph (1979) discusses a variety of developmental and clinical emotional indicators, which may improve the overall evaluation of a particular child's self-concept profile. In contrast, the 21 self-concept situation items are objectively scored. In general, responses suggesting a positive self-concept are credited with two points whereas negative answers receive zero points. Ambivalent responses such as "sometimes I'm clean and sometimes I'm dirty," "both," "not sure," or "I don't know" are scored one point. On the record form, the question mark in the far right-hand column should be circled for ambivalent responses. Summing the points for all 21 items then derives a global score. Global scores may range from 0 to 42 points and can be calculated from a scoring key.

The basic format of the JSSYC requires that the subject be initially able to correctly distinguish between pairs of pictures for each item on the scale (except for the neutral contrast pair items). However, at times, the subject may be unable to do so. The improper discrimination of any pair of pictures results in a "Confusion" score which

should be indicated by placing a C to the right of the question mark. Subsequently, the examiner should record the Confusion score and then provide the child with an explanation of what each picture represents before repeating an item. In such cases, the Confirm step is strongly advised. Occasionally a child may respond to the question “Now which one is most like you?” by pointing as well as giving a verbal reply. If the picture selected by pointing is not the same as the verbal reply, then this discrepancy is also recorded as a Confusion score even if the original distinguishing response was correct. In this case, the verbal reply should be considered the official scoreable response. Furthermore, if a child seems totally unable to comprehend the meaning behind a given pair of pictures (despite the examiner’s explanatory efforts), it is suggested that the item be presented and responded to solely in a verbal fashion. A Confusion score would also be noted in such a case. It is important to emphasize that an item may be scored as a Confusion only when the subject is unable to accurately distinguish between the pair of pictures presented. Misunderstanding the overall intent of a particular item should not result in a Confusion score. Joseph (1979) provides a detailed discussion regarding theoretical and clinical interpretations of particular items and item combinations when qualitatively evaluating record form profiles.

The JSSYC has developed built-in safeguards to minimize the confounding effects of situational responding problems. If, for example, a particular subject is wheelchair bound, he or she might respond to Item 8 on the preschool-primary section by pointing out that they cannot run. The examiner should then respond by asking: But if you could run, do you think that you would be a slow runner or a fast runner? In

another example, a child might respond to Item 11 on the preschool-primary section by stating that they've never played baseball. The examiner should then respond by asking: But if you did play baseball, do you think that you would win or lose? The record form provides appropriate examiner replies for select items that are more prone to eliciting situation-specific responses.

### **Time Frame for Collecting Data**

The time frame for data collection was November 1998 through February 1999. A letter was drafted to the parents of all the children that were tested. The letter explained the testing procedure, and that the outcome of the test results would be used for research. The advantage of the testing was that the two teachers involved obtained documented insight into each student's perception of her/himself.

### **Testing Procedure**

Each student was individually tested and re-tested at one week intervals. The testing was done in a first grade classroom during a non-instructional time. The scheduling was during the student's lunch. The approximate time allotted for each testing period was ten minutes. It was the goal of the examiner to test three students each day. If a student was absent when the re-test was scheduled then the re-test was given the day the student returned to school after the absence. All first graders were tested and upon completion of that testing the pre-first students were tested.

### **Hypothesis and Variables**

The JSSYC is a reliable indicator of a child's self- concept.

The null hypothesis is that there is no difference between the test and the re-test scores. The alternative hypothesis is that there is a difference between the test and re-

test scores.

The dependent variable is the score the student receives on the test and the re-test. The independent variable is the test, JSSYC.

Harter, (1989) asserted that although children younger than eight years old possess an underlying sense of self, they cannot yet verbalize it; furthermore, they do not even have a conscious concept of it.

The design of the JSSYC was participant friendly. The picture choices were clear and easy for a young child to discriminate. The questioning process was concise and easy to comprehend which made the test almost gamelike to the child. It allowed for one on one interaction with the test giver and it was of short duration, approximately ten minutes, which did not overwhelm the child physically or emotionally. Such a design, which took all of these developmental concerns into consideration, had a high degree of success in eliciting the responses for which it was designed.

### **Design**

This study involved repeated measures. The scores on the first test were compared to the scores on the re-test to see if the student's answers changed on the second administration of the test. A paired t-test was utilized to analyze the data.

### **Testable Hypotheses**

The hypothesis as stated in Chapter One was that the JSSYC is a reliable indicator of a child's self- concept. The null hypothesis is that there is no difference between the test and re-test scores, and the alternative hypothesis is that there is a difference between the test and re-test scores. The dependent variable is the score on the test and re-test, and the independent variable is the test, JSSYC.



### **Analysis**

An analysis of the data was done using a t-test that compared the test and the re-test scores of the thirty-four subjects.

### **Summary**

After administering the JSSYC and comparing test re-test scores it was determined, using a small population, that the test was a reliable indicator of a young child's self-concept.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Analysis of Data**

The hypothesis as stated in Chapter One is that the JSSYC is a reliable indicator of a child's self-concept. The null hypothesis states that there is no difference between the test and re-test scores ( $H_0 = \text{Test 1} - \text{Test 2} = 0$ ) while the alternative hypothesis states that there is a difference between the test and re-test scores ( $H_A = \text{Test 1} - \text{Test 2} \neq 0$ ). The dependent variable is the score on the test and re-test. The independent variable is the test, the JSSYC.

Test 1 yielded a mean score of 40.0294 ( $F=2.7467$ ) while the mean score of Test 2 was 40.9118 ( $F=1.7815$ ). A paired difference t-test was used to analyze these data, which produced a significance of 0.039 (2-tailed), and a 95% confidence interval of the difference of  $(-1.7185, 4.62E^{-02})$ .

A paired sample correlation analysis yielded a Pearson correlation coefficient of .508, and a corresponding significance of 0.002.

### **Interpretation of Results**

Because the calculated significance is less than alpha, the null hypothesis, stating that there is no difference between the test and re-test scores was rejected. The alternative hypothesis, stating that there is a difference between the test and re-test scores was accepted. There was a difference between the test and re-test scores.

It is germane to the analysis to mention that there is an outlier, student number nine. On the first test the subject scored a thirty, while on the re-test the subject scored a forty-two. This outlier markedly influenced the standard deviation and the resultant statistical test results.

A correlation of .50 to .75 is considered a moderate to good relationship. The correlation of .508 was markedly influenced by the outlying value, and the correlation coefficient does not provide a good description of the relationship between the two variables when the distribution is skewed, or contains an outlying value.

### **Analysis of Individual Scores**

The scores on the JSSYC have a quantitative equivalency as follows:

36-42 solid self-concept

34-35 beginning area of concern

31-33 distinctly poor self-concept

31-0 high risk area

Of the thirty-four subjects in the study there were two whose scores were of concern. One subject scored thirty on the first test and forty-two, a perfect score, on the re-test. This is a child that shows mood swings in the classroom. His tone for the day very often seems to reflect what went on in the morning prior to coming to school. The discrepancy between the two scores raises a concern about this child's self-concept. The other subject scored thirty-four on the first test and thirty-six on the re-test. Though the first test would indicate a beginning area of concern the re-test score was at the lower limit of a solid self-concept.

### **Summary**

In the final analysis the null hypothesis, stating that there is no difference between the test and re-test scores, was rejected. The alternative hypothesis, stating that there is a difference between the test and re-test scores, was accepted. The significance was .002. One of the limitations was that the tested population of thirty-four subjects was small. Another consideration was the demography of the Moorestown, New Jersey. The population is upper middle class and this may have skewed the test results.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Summary**

This research presented an opportunity to explore the self-concept arena of six and seven year old children in a public school setting. The cognitive, social, and emotional development of a six or seven year old child is very concrete in nature. The understanding of self-concept is very abstract. The child at this stage of development is learning to discriminate between competence and confidence. They are egocentric by nature. The child is developing a sense of self through their perception of their own competence and how the significant others in their lives view them. Significant others are an ever-expanding audience. They may include siblings, parents, family members, extended family members, and peers, teachers and people that the child comes in contact with in their daily life experiences. The combination of the child's experience, their perceptions of those experiences, and the perceived acceptance or rejection that the child receives from the significant others is the gel that molds self-concept.

The research about self-concept and the young child is limited. The JSSYC is a tool that was developed to measure self-concept reliably and in a child friendly manner. From the examiner's viewpoint the test was easy to understand, administer, and score. The test takers appeared to be comfortable in the testing environment. The test was of

short duration, approximately ten minutes, which is developmentally appropriate. The picture prompts appeared to be easily understood and served to clarify the responses.

Being involved in the re-standardization was professionally satisfying. The nature of the study was interesting and afforded experience in the techniques of administering an individual test.

In the final statistical analysis the null hypothesis, stating that there was no difference between the test and re-test scores, was rejected. The alternative hypothesis, stating that there is a difference between the test and re-test scores was accepted. The significance was .002. The correlation coefficient of .508 was markedly influenced by an outlying value.

The data acquired from the testing was shared with the two teachers whose students were participants in the study. This provides additional supportive information about each individual student's self-concept. It may be a useful tool to target areas of the pre-existing curriculum that may require more emphasis. The information obtained may be geared to the individual child to remediate weaknesses and build upon their strengths. The outcome of the testing definitely supported the school-based goal of developing a positive self-concept in the students that attend Mary E Roberts Elementary School.

## **Discussion**

Student number nine is an outlier. The score on the first test was thirty, which skewed the correlation coefficient markedly. Perhaps using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, which eliminates outliers, would have given a significantly better correlation coefficient. This test assigns ranks to the scores, instead of using the raw scores. Using

an analysis of ranks, the lowest score of 30, would have appeared only slightly less than the second lowest score instead of appearing 25% less, as in the present analysis.

There were two test questions that it is necessary to comment upon because of the manner in which the subjects approached them. The first was question number one. It states, "One of these boys/girls is very clean and the other boy/girl is very dirty. Now which one is most like you?" Three of the subjects, all of whom were boys, indicated that they were dirty on the first test. The three boys all listened to the question and then looked at their jeans, which had some dirt on them, and proceeded to answer the question, after the visual inspection, that they were dirty. This would appear that they are judging their cleanliness verses dirtiness upon the physical appearance of dirt. Since they are at the pre-operational stage of development it may be more a concrete factor of dirt or no dirt and not an indication that they really thought of themselves as dirty. On the re-test, two of the subjects did the same inspection and seeing that their jeans were not dirty answered the second test positively, that they saw themselves as clean. The third subject upon inspection reported that he was dirty after looking at his jeans that were dirty.

The other question, that really caused the most thought for the subjects to answer, was question four. The prompt was, "Let's pretend that your mother and /or father want to visit a beautiful park for one day, but because it costs a lot of money to get into the park, they can only take one boy or girl with them. Who do you think your mother and/or father would pick to go with them to the park-a brother/sister or you?" In the analysis eight children in the study indicated on both tests that the parent would take a sibling. This response was scored as a zero for self-concept. It may be questionable if this is a valid indicator of their own self-concept, as some of their spontaneous responses to this

question would seem to indicate a sophisticated understanding that they had for the family dynamics. One girl said her parents would take her younger sister because she is smaller. A boy responded that the younger brother would be taken because he was the littlest in the family and another said that the younger sibling would be chosen because he likes cotton candy. One of the respondents on both tests answered that the family wouldn't go at all because it would not be fair. This child received a score of one point for his answer yet it would seem to indicate that he really thought about his family as a unit and the values that they place on each other as part of that unit. Two other children who on the first test said their parents would take them and for that response scored two points indicating a positive self-concept changed their response on the re-test. When questioned, as to why they changed their answer, they both said that they had thought about it and their mom or dad would take nobody because it would not be fair. The fact that they thought about it over the course of the week, and were able to express the feelings that they did about the question, may indicate that they have a very strong sense of family relatedness, and value themselves as integral members of the family unit. For this way of thinking however, they received only one point as opposed to two that they received on the first test for choosing themselves. Research indicates parents have the greatest influence on their child's self-image since they usually spend the most time with their child. Parents can cause their child to have a positive or negative feeling about themselves by what they say to and about him. Generally, children who are treated with love and respect view themselves more positively. It may be that the children who rethought their answers, and felt strongly that their parents wouldn't go at all or wouldn't take anyone at all because it wouldn't be fair, had a very strong sense of self. It is



questionable whether responding this way is really an indication of negative self-concept.

Twenty of the subjects were first graders and fourteen were pre-first students. Chronologically they are approximately the same age. The first graders are comprised of six year olds that turn seven during the first grade school year, while the pre-first are the younger children that are six but have their birthdays in the summer or early fall following the pre-first school year. The mean score on the first test for the first graders was 40.3 while the mean for the pre-first was 39.6. The mean for the first graders on the second test was 41.2 while for the pre-first it was 40.5. Less than a point divides the subgroups on each test. At the outset of this paper an assumption was made that there may have been a wide variation of scores between the first graders and their pre-first counterparts because of their developmental levels, even though their ages are chronologically the same. This assumption proved to be untrue. However behavioral differences were observed between the two groups.

In the administration of the test there were some test taking strategies noted in the pre-first subjects that were not apparent in the first grade test takers. A more concrete approach to some of the questions was visible. One notable response was to question ten. It states, "One of these boys/girls can jump very high, and the other boy/girl can't jump very much at all. Now which one is most like you?" A pre-first student got up from his chair, jumped into the air and responded, "I can jump high." This particular instance seems to support Maslow's theory that self-esteem is based on competence and adequacy at a task rather than praise or criticism from others. Upon observing this child during his self imposed test of jumping ability, it may be that he needed to measure his own

competency. Once he finished his own test, his body language and his verbal expression appeared to have reinforced his belief that he could jump high.

More time was required to settle some of the pre-first students into a test-taking mode. Some were less willing to be re-tested, and more anxious for the testing to be over in order to join their friends back in the cafeteria. Some pre-first students were not as serious during testing, and that was not an issue when testing the first grade students. During the re-test, in both the first grade and the pre-first setting there were two students who pointed to the answers before the questions were re-read. This may be an indication of good recall of prior questioning and in both instances their responses matched those on the first test.

Many studies confirmed that there is a positive relationship between teacher's self-concept and student's cognitive growth. Research also indicates that teachers are "significant others" in the lives of young children and those who are threatened by feelings of inadequacy are bound to project these feelings onto the children they teach, regardless of how they structure their programs. Two of the questions on the JSSYC were directed toward this topic. Number three stated, "One of these boys/girls has a teacher who doesn't like him/her very much, and the other boy/girl has a teacher who likes him/her a lot. Now which one happens to you the most?" All thirty-four subjects responded positively to this question on the test and re-test. Question eighteen stated, "In school, this boy/girl's teacher likes his/her work, and the other boy's/girl's teacher does not like his/her work. Now which happens to you the most?" On the first test thirty-three responded positively, and all thirty-four responded positively on the re-test. (The child that responded negatively was the outlier that had an overall score of thirty on the first

test.) Given the positive responses on these two questions it may be concluded that the climate in these two classrooms is one that reflects a positive regard for the students. The individual student's perception of their class work reflects a positive image as well.

One limitation noted in Chapter One, was that demographically Moorestown, New Jersey, is an upper middle class community, and that the population being tested may be skewed. Two of the questions, which may support this are, number six and twelve. In question six it states, "One of these boys/girls has a lot of toys to play with, and the other boy/girl has no toys to play with. Now which happens to you the most?" All thirty-four subjects answered positively that they had lots of toys. Question twelve stated, "Here are two boys/girls that are dressed up as pumpkins for a Halloween party. One boy/girl gets lots of candy at the party and the other boy/girl only gets a little candy. Now which happens to you the most?" All thirty-four responded that they got a lot of candy. The community and its elevated economic status may be reflected in the responses that were given.

### **Conclusions**

The results of this study accept the alternative hypothesis, that there was a difference between the scores on the test and re-test. The null hypothesis, stating that there was no difference between the test and re-test, was rejected. The significance of the outlier score must be taken into consideration, as well as the small sample size being a possible limitation. The mean score on Test 1 was 40.0294 ( $F=2.7467$ ), and the mean score on Test 2 was 40.9118 ( $F=1.7815$ ), would support that the test is reliable.

### **Implications for Research**

Through the research presented in this paper it is evident that self-concept is measurable at a young age. The questions posed and the format used were age appropriate and easily understood. None of the test subjects appeared intimidated or threatened by the test or the testing situation. It was easy to facilitate. It seems to be a good format for young children.

Because of the responses observed and recorded on questions one and four, it may be wise for these two questions be further researched as to their validity at the lower end of the age range for this test. Since this test was designed for children from pre-school through adolescence, it may be interesting to see if trends exist in the manner in which younger children and older children interpret these two questions.

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